

REMARKS

Claims 1-19 are pending in the application. Claims 1-3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanaka (U.S. Patent No. 5,432,566) and further in view of Kawabata (U.S. Patent No. 6,373,533).

By this Amendment, Applicants have amended claim 1 and have added new claims 4-19. Applicants representative thanks the Examiner and the Supervisory Examiner for the in-person Interview on March 23, 2004.

Further to the Interview, Applicants respectfully submit that the cited references, even when combined, do not teach or suggest a first masking device for passing only a luminance signal corresponding to a pixel in a first detection range in the vertical direction of an image which is indicated by an input luminance signal; and a second masking device for passing only a luminance signal corresponding to a pixel in a second detection range in the vertical direction of the image which is indicated by said input luminance signal, wherein the first detection range corresponds to a first predetermined image area and the second detection range corresponds to a second predetermined area, which is not equal to the first predetermined area.

As explained at the Interview, Tanaka is directed to using an average brightness level circuit 5 for detecting an average brightness level and further using the average brightness level to correct the brightness of a displayed image. (col. 7, ll. 48-52). Indeed, as explained at the Interview, Tanaka does not even mention the use of a histogram. In this respect, Applicants respectfully submit that while the other cited reference, Kawabata, teaches the use of a histogram correction circuit, Kawabata does not teach or suggest any apparatus having the claimed features, including, for example, a first masking device for passing only a luminance signal corresponding to a pixel in a

first detection range in the vertical direction of an image which is indicated by an input luminance signal; and a second masking device for passing only a luminance signal corresponding to a pixel in a second detection range in the vertical direction of the image which is indicated by said input luminance signal, wherein the first detection range corresponds to a first predetermined image area and the second detection range corresponds to a second predetermined area, which is not equal to the first predetermined area, as required by claim 1. Thus, for at least the above reasons, claim 1 is patentable over the cited references.

Claims 2 and 3 depend from claim 1 and thus are patentable for at least the reasons given above with respect to claim 1.

As explained at the Interview, newly added claim 4 is also patentable at least because, even when combined, the cited references do not teach or suggest any apparatus having all the recited features including: (1) a first masking circuit for masking a first predetermined image area component of a digital video signal to output a first masked signal; (2) a second masking circuit for masking a second predetermined image area component, which is not equal to the first predetermined image area component, of the digital video signal to output a second masked signal; (3) a first histogram memory for storing frequency distribution data for each of a plurality of luminance levels corresponding to the first masked signal for each predetermined period; and (4) a second histogram memory for storing frequency distribution data for each of a plurality of luminance levels corresponding to the second masked signal for each predetermined time period.

Claims 5-9 depend, directly or indirectly, from claim 4 and thus are patentable for at least the reasons given above with respect to claim 4.

As explained at the Interview, newly added claim 10 is also patentable at least because, even when combined, the cited references do not teach or suggest any apparatus having the claimed features, including: (1) masking a first predetermined image area component of a digital video signal to output a first masked signal using a first masking circuit; (2) masking a second predetermined image area component, which is not equal to the first predetermined image area component of the digital video signal, to output a second masked signal using a second masking circuit; (3) storing frequency distribution data for each of a plurality of luminance levels corresponding to the first masked signal for each predetermined period in a first histogram memory area; and (4) storing second frequency distribution data for each of a plurality of luminance levels corresponding to the second masked signal for each predetermined time period in a second histogram memory area.

Claims 11-14 depend from claim 10 and thus are patentable for at least the reasons given above with respect to claim 10.

Newly added claim 15 recites limitations in a means-plus-function form and corresponds to claim 4, and thus is patentable for at least the reasons given above regarding claim 4.

Claims 16-19 depend, directly or indirectly, from claim 15 and thus are patentable for at least the reasons given above with respect to claim 15.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully seek allowance of pending claims 1-19. If there is any fee due in connection with the filing of this Supplemental Amendment, please charge the fee to our Deposit Account No. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

FINNEGAN, HENDERSON, FARABOW,
GARRETT & DUNNER, L.L.P.

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By: 

Ranjeev K. Singh
Reg. No. 47,093